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ABSTRACT

Higher education's concern for volunteerism and community service may be traced to the middle of the 19th century. The national organization Campus Contact, which ties institutions of higher education to a clear-cut service mission, had 305 member institutions in 1992. A survey of Campus Contact members, to which 112 members responded, established that 67% of its members offer courses linking service with the curriculum and 52% award academic credit for course-related service. The emerging trend toward increasing integration of service with academics will likely increase dramatically in 1994 when the Community Service Provision of the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1992 begin. There are a number of reasons why forestry programs should engage in service learning. According to the respondents to the Campus Contact study, service-learning improves students' communication and problem-solving skills, boosts students' research skills, enhances self-esteem and leadership development, and increases personal and social responsibility. The six most frequently reported types of service-learning programs involve tutoring, mentoring, working with homelessness/housing, dealing with elderly persons, improving literacy, and improving the environment. Ideas for potential service learning activities may be obtained from teachers, club or group leaders, students, and community groups/members. (MN)

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Service-Learning and Forestry

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Although the topic of "service" appears to have received more attention recently in higher education than in previous years, it is not a new concern. As early as 1869, Charles Elliot, in his Harvard inaugural address, asked, "And what will the University do for the community?" His response was, "It will foster the sense of public duty - that great virtue which makes republics possible." Elliot's premise was that institutions of higher education ought to support those activities which develop generosity, civic mindedness and the capacity for conscientious action. Since the post-Civil War period a number of famous individuals have made service statements that are noted as "quotable quotes." Theodore Roosevelt said that "This country will not be a good place for any of us unless we make it a good place for all of us to live." Probably the most memorable JFK comment is "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." Martin Luther King is often remembered for his statement, "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve." President George Bush will be remembered for his "Thousand Points of Light" program.

Background of Community Service and Service-Learning

The United States has a long history of volunteerism and community service. Cooperation in the colonies was essential in order to provide food, shelter and defense. Various groups, such as minorities and the poor, have over time tried to provide for their own and others' needs through organized religion, fraternal groups, and ethnic associations. Among other provident ideals, the Social Compact of 1620 bound the governed "to all care for each other" (Ellis and Noyes 1990:18). Many associations concerned with social and health welfare, such as the National Easter Seal Society, City of Hope, and the Rockefeller Foundations, started as volunteer institutions. The Civilian Conservation Corps, introduced during the New Deal, used the concept of community service on a large scale (National Governors' Association 1989:2). President John F. Kennedy fostered the Peace Corps in 1961 to create a group of skilled American volunteers to help the world's developing nations (Ellis and Noyes 1990:259).

There is a national organization called Campus Compact which ties institutions of higher education to a clear-cut service mission. Composed of visionary presidents of institutions of higher education, Compact members help integrate student involvement in public service and into education's central mission and goals. During 1992, there were 305 member institutions including West Virginia University, and a number of State Campus Compacts have been formed. Currently there are four members in the West Virginia Campus Compact although the state has 25 potential members.

The strongly held belief that "hands on," experiential learning contributes to the educational process is not new - Forestry classes are noted for labs, field labs, and field trips. Confucius is recorded as having said, "I read and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand." Forestry Clubs have long embraced participatory events such as "woodsmen" contests and Forestry schools have sponsored various volunteer activities such as holiday food drives and fund raising for agencies such as United Way to assure that their students understand the civic nature of their preparation programs.

Service-Learning Defined. But there are significant and subtle differences between experiential activities, service or volunteer activities, and service-learning activities. Students can have "hands on" activity in the lab or on a field trip when learning tree identification, for example, but that has not addressed any local human or community need nor instilled in students a sense of social responsibility. In fact, random volunteer activity which is not couched into a supportive education context will most assuredly guarantee that significant learning or effective service will not occur. However, learning from service experiences is not automatic - critical reflection and careful analysis are essential. If the larger social issues behind human needs are to be recognized and understood students (or service participants) must be prepared, monitored (supervised), supported, and later

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debriefed with sufficient time and guidance for reflection in order to assimilate and analyze what has been gained from the experience. In this situation, a reciprocity develops between giving and receiving.

Service-learning is an educational method "under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community." It is a method that "is integrated into the students' academic curriculum . . . that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities" (National and Community Service Act of 1990). When community service is thoughtfully structured according to these traits, service-learning promotes experiences in problem solving, tangible public benefits to the community, chances to learn in a different way - from doing - plus increased competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Participants should learn about the responsibilities and obligations of life as well as the enjoyment of its privileges (The William T. Grant Foundation 1988:3).

Trends in Service-Learning. How common is integrating service into the curriculum? A survey was conducted by Campus Compact which resulted in 112 of the 305 member institutions of higher education responding. Results revealed that 67% of the members offer courses that link service with the curriculum, 52% provide academic credit for service related to a course, 23% have policies or incentives that either encourage faculty involvement or foster links between service and academic study, 18% offer courses on philanthropy or volunteerism, and 11% have a formal graduation requirement related to public service (McCarty and Schwartz 1992).

Seven pertinent service-learning trends seem to emerge:

1. There is greater integration of service with academics.

2. The number of projects programs is increasing.

3. Increased support is coming from non-academic departments.

4. Partnerships between institutions of higher education and agencies, organizations, businesses, etc. are being established to create collaborative service projects.

5. In order to coordinate service efforts and centralize information, institutions of higher education are establishing and staffing community service centers on campus.

6. A reflection component is being added to service activities so that students may better understand the societal need for, cause of, and results of their actions.

7. At more and more schools, service is being included as a freshman orientation activity, linked to financial aid, and is a graduation requirement.

No doubt, these emerging trends will increase dramatically in 1994 when the Community Service Provision of the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1992 begin. This amendment addresses work study allocation. Beginning in FY 1994, all institutions that receive work study funds must use at least five percent of that money to compensate students in community service placements. This stipulation was added because nationally, less than two-tenths of one percent of work study compensation was being used for community service. Furthermore, any institution wanting to apply for reallocated funds (unspent funds) must have used at least 10 percent of their funds for community service and agree that all reallocated funds will support community service activities.

Why Should Forestry Programs Engage in Service-Learning?

Besides the obvious contributions to communities and groups served, why should institutions of higher education and forestry programs specifically engage in service-learning activities when the curriculum is already so packed? Beyond the justification that research indicates substantial benefits to the student, other direct results include: 88% improved interpersonal communication skills, nearly 82% believed that they could make an impact on social problems, 69% increased ability to solve problems, 60% improved ability to take risks, 29% were able to apply research skills and 19% percent improved writing skills. In addition, researchers reported greater mastery of skills and content, increased math and reading scores, reduced drug use, approached course work with greater understanding, more active career exploration, growth in moral and ego development, enhanced self esteem, more positive attitudes towards adults, increased sense of personal and social responsibility, leadership development, practical expression of what is learned in the classroom, and participation in meaningful activity. President Bucklew, West Virginia University, also firmly believes that community service activities help student retention and encourage students to remain in the state following graduation.

> Too often, institutions divorce service from their academic mission and thereby marginalize the role of community service in a student's undergraduate education. By providing students with an opportunity to integrate their service experience with theoretical constructs learned in the classroom, however, colleges and universities can greatly strengthen not only the service performed, but also the students' education and sense of civic responsibility (McCarty and Schwartz 1992).

Recently, Division of Forestry students and family members took part in a two-day service project at Ice Mountain. The Ice Mountain Preserve, located in the Eastern Panhandle, is operated by the West Virginia Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

How to Incorporate Service-Learning Activities

The six most frequently reported types of service-learning programs at Campus Compact institutions involve tutoring (91%), mentoring (76%), working with homelessness/housing (73%), dealing with the elderly (67%), improving literacy (65%), and improving the environment (63%). Other popular service-learning activities relate to topics of health/AIDS and populations that are physically challenged.

Classes in Forestry programs have a unique advantage over many traditional classes since labs are an integral learning component of the curriculum and students expect field trips and field placements. Forestry Schools, Divisions, and departments have another advantage over more traditional departments like English in that a wider range of disciplines are often included. For example, at West Virginia University the Division of Forestry comprises four academic degree programs - Forest Management, Wood Industries, Wildlife and Fisheries Management, and Recreation and Park Management. The inherent scope of these offerings enhances service-learning opportunities.

Recreation programs have historically been involved with providing students with "real life" experiences throughout their curriculum. At WVU a recreation student begins the first year with Re. Pk. 44, a course that has a 30-hour placement with a recreation related agency or organization and concludes with a full semester internship, usually the summer between the Junior and Senior years. Between these two experiences are two other required lab "field placements." Service-learning can occur naturally by directly working with a designated population such as the elderly, the homeless, the physically challenged; or service-learning can occur indirectly by working for the community or a section of the community. Therefore, service-learning occurs when students take others on a guided hike or when a group of students do trail maintenance, prepare trail maps/brochures or write an article for the paper about the trail area.

There also are a multitude of service-learning opportunities for students in Wildlife and Fisheries Management, Forest Management and Wood Industries. Service-learning does not have to take place during class time nor be a class requirement. Service-learning activities may be included in a list of options students may select. For example, the activities may be connected with a club or other campus organization, or the activities could be part of required professional competencies that need to be completed, but that do not receive extra credit.

A number of students in the Division of Forestry's Wildlife program eagerly volunteer at the Raptor Center, where injured raptors receive professional attention until release is possible. While veterinarians treat the injured birds, willing volunteers do all the support activities from cleaning to feeding to preparing the birds for release. Community service and service-learning do not have to be structured off-campus activities. When the Forestry Club engages in projects on the University Forest, the public receives a direct benefit. When students help prepare for the Forest Festival or help distribute or plant trees, service-learning occurs if the students are trained, monitored, and reflect on the consequences of their actions.

Seventy of the 112 Campus Compact schools that completed the 1992-93 survey indicated that service-learning activities included environmental programs, making the environment the sixth most popular topic (McCarty and Schwartz 1992:28). The previous year, however, the Environment was the second most popular topic with 82 of the responding 105 members indicating some type of participation (Zivi 1991:7). In the environmental programs at Brevard Community College in Florida student volun-

teers assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with population research, public information, serving as guides to visitors, and maintaining trails and facilities. Students from Occidental College in Los Angeles participate in a community service alternative spring break program in which they are involved in hiking trail repair, beach and lagoon cleanup and tree planting. In 1991 Warren Wilson College students built a red wolf habitat and nature trails at a local nature center. Students from West Virginia Compact institutions spent their 1992 Thanksgiving Break in Homestead, Florida, helping to clean up and rebuild after Hurricane Andrew.

Potential service-learning activities. Generating ideas for service-learning activities does not rest with the person in charge of the class, club, or group. While current campus and community should be addressed, students or club participants should be involved in identifying current needs and included in determining how these needs should or could be addressed. Pondering, investigating, gathering information, and asking local groups for input are just a few of the preliminary steps to ready students for proactive community service agendas. Are there any areas that need a cleanup or trees planted? Is there a group or groups that need a speaker or educational information about the environment? Would other students benefit by the writing of environmental education articles in the campus paper? Is there any current environmental legislation that needs assistance in order to be passed? Does some environmental group need fund raising assistance? Would a local school or group like an Arbor Day advisor to provide information about tree planting and tree care? Are there families that need cut firewood? Is there a local natural area that needs signs, brochures, trail maintenance, guides, etc.? Do the scouts, Hi-Y groups, or 4-H need any environmental information or leaders?

The list of possibilities, while immense, provides something that can be integrated easily into academic life, that meets the needs of the community, at the same time improving both educational and personal development of the students and other participants. And that includes the professors and other group leaders. Give it a try and be sure to include feedback and evaluation opportunities for both those served and those providing the assistance. Consistently the service-learning components of our courses have been the most popular and the most successful.

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